

# DRAMA

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<p><b>Paper 9482/11</b> <b>Open-Book Written Examination</b></p>
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## Key messages

This syllabus is now well-established, although 2024 sees the first examination based on 'new' prescribed texts.

Component 1 of this AS/A Level syllabus in Drama assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of how Drama may be interpreted, on stage, to communicate meaning to an audience. Candidates need to have a working knowledge of how plays are staged in the professional theatre.

While a literary understanding of themes and characters may be useful to candidates, Component 1 of the Drama syllabus assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of practical theatre, and it is imperative that candidates have had experience – both theoretical and practical – of the application of the skills of a director, a performer and/or a designer to their selected texts.

## General comments

There were very many very good, and some outstanding, responses to a range of question in this June series.

In this series, candidates mainly answered questions on *As You Like It*, *The Rivals*, *A View from the Bridge* and *Small Island* in **Section A** and on *Oedipus Rex*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Blood Wedding* and *Boom* in **Section B**.

*The Rivals*, *Oedipus Rex* and *The Cherry Orchard* were only attempted by a minority of candidates.

Candidates appeared to find the questions on their set plays quite accessible, and many wrote detailed, practical responses to the precise focus of individual questions, which resulted in vivid realisations of the drama extract or selected sections.

Very good answers tended to demonstrate a confident understanding and use of theatrical terminology which underpinned their interpretation of a moment or section of text. These answers also incorporated apt textual support throughout.

In less successful answers, candidates revealed more limited familiarity with theatrical vocabulary, or they applied such vocabulary inaccurately or carelessly and were therefore restricted in their ability to communicate their ideas.

A notable feature of this series' responses was the reliance upon empty references to 'proxemics' which peppered some answers with no discernible benefit. Actors *move* on stage, towards or away from one another and about the stage; the concept of 'opening' or 'closing' their 'proxemics' is an artificial one and does not form a part of an actor's or director's working vocabulary. Candidates did not use the term in a way that enhanced their answers.

Candidates should also be reminded that, in **Section B**, where editions of the plays are not prescribed, they should never refer to their texts using page numbers or line numbers. They should always illustrate their ideas by using short but complete phrases or longer quotations from the set text. Use of ellipses, which was seen frequently, should also be avoided, as so often the sense of the quotation is removed and the immediacy of the unfolding moment on stage is lost.

Candidates should also never refer to characters by using a single initial (C for Catherine, E for Eddie, B for Beatrice, for example) and for the same reason. Some answers were seen in this series where candidates combined the use of initials instead of character names with the use of elliptical quotations. This had the effect of making their responses hard to understand and robbed them of any sense of a fluent stage performance. It may have saved the candidates in question some time in the examination, but it always hampered clarity of expression often leading to work being incomprehensible and it seldom led to a successful response to the question.

It continued to be the case that candidates often referred, at some length, to previous productions of their chosen text, but without making any attempt to explain the connection between previous productions and their own ideas. Such references attracted little credit and took up time and space that would have been better directed towards interpretation of the play/extract in question.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed. Many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to exaggerated facial expression, stage positioning and tone of voice. It sometimes appeared that candidates did not have very much experience of watching actors at work.

Design questions attracted more subtle responses in this series. There were some enthusiastic and some successful answers on design seen in relation to a range of texts. Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element is only credit-worthy if the interpretation is closely matched to the demand of the question and is clearly justified.

When it came to SGC, many candidates made very little apparent attempt to demonstrate their knowledge or understanding of the chosen play in terms of its style, genre and context. This cost many candidates dearly, since this part of the task is worth a third of the total marks available.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

#### ***As You Like it***

(a) This was a popular play in this series.

Many candidates displayed an enthusiasm for *As You Like It* and appeared to enjoy answering this question about the creation of comedy.

Other candidates struggled to create appropriate comedy in this question. There were several answers where candidates wrote about the humour in the lines but then offered negligible ideas about how to realise the humour through directorial strategies.

Others ignored the dialogue and made suggestions for slapstick humour derived from 'falling over' or 'bumping into trees'. Not all of the suggestions made were appropriate and/or dramatically feasible; for example, more than one candidate had Rosalind struggling to cover up her 'cleavage'. One candidate suggested that a bird landing on Orlando's head would be comical.

There were some potentially comic moments created from Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede; while some did focus on her costume malfunctioning, or long hair escaping from a cap, others considered the sudden modulation of her voice from an attempt at masculinity to the trilling of a falsetto. One or two invented some 'business' with a sword buckled to her costume.

For some candidates, the idea of the characters being in the forest was deemed to be hilarious but there were few suggestions made that were capable of realising intentions.

The most successful responses often used the performers' interaction with the audience and had either Rosalind or Orlando shooting quizzical glances towards them as if eliciting their sympathy in a 'tricky' situation. Conveying Rosalind's attraction to Orlando to the audience, whilst keeping up her disguise, did provide some inventive candidates with opportunities to create comedy. Some candidates did not understand/know that Rosalind was in disguise.

Where candidates believed that Orlando had just met up with the girl, Rosalind, in the forest, after having met her at the wrestling match, the scope for comedy was reduced, and the candidate's knowledge of the play was in serious doubt.

Where candidates did know that Rosalind is in disguise, there was more scope for comedy although not always exploited. More imaginative answers included Celia in their response and made her disbelieving reactions to the encounter a source of comedy. Others omitted Celia entirely.

There were several successful responses that noted the comedy that could be derived from Rosalind's assertiveness compared with Orlando's submissiveness.

Better answers also showed an understanding of the text and how its delivery would create comedy.

- (b) This response was not as popular as **Question (a)** but tended to be more successful where candidates understood that Rosalind is in disguise and that Orlando believes that he is addressing and being addressed by a young 'swain' who tends sheep in the forest.

Candidates often emphasised the besotted nature of Orlando as regards Rosalind. These candidates believed that sympathy is due to Orlando for his obliviousness to Rosalind's stratagem.

Most candidates realised that Orlando's amiable appearance and his courtesy would help to create a sympathetic audience response as well as the sincerity of his declared affection for his (absent) love.

Less successful answers had Orlando weeping and wailing about his love in a generalised way, often believing that Rosalind was acting as herself; in many cases these ideas were not supported with specific lines of text.

Some good work was seen on Orlando's use of facial and physical expression as Rosalind 'ticked off' all of the 'marks of love' that Orlando did not possess. Orlando becoming more forlorn and insulted with every 'mark' disregarded.

There were some very careless readings of the question as well as of the character.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Those who integrated SCG material into their answer either by alluding to its comic and/or its pastoral genre or by considering Elizabethan/Jacobean notions of masculinity and/or femininity were frequently more successful in their answers than those who merely outlined Shakespeare's interest in these themes at the start of the response.

Some candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre but did not succeed in making their points relevant.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and did not access many of the 10 marks available.

### **Question 2**

#### ***The Rivals***

- (a) There were very few responses seen to this question.

Most candidates who attempted it had a good understanding of the situation. They appreciated that while Faulkland's amusing 'distress' was the main feature of the scene, Acres' ignorance of the

offence that he was giving in describing Julia's 'high spirits' and Absolute's cynical enjoyment of the whole spectacle, all merited close attention from the director to create a comical scene.

Most successful, were answers that looked at the comedy created by the interaction of all three characters. Some candidates dealt with the men individually and somewhat missed the point.

Some of the more successful responses often relied on the convention of the 'aside' and/or of the actors' individual interaction with the audience, to enhance the comic potential of the unfolding events.

**(b)**

Some candidates implied, through their performance ideas that Faulkland is insecure and that he lacks self-awareness, that he is both possessive and jealous, but they rarely made explicit that any one of these qualities were part of Faulkland's character.

In better answers, candidates identified a character trait such as 'unreasonableness' and then used examples from the text where Faulkland exhibited this trait in abundance.

Some candidates noted Falkland's essential misogyny and expressed a wholehearted desire not to encounter such a character in their own lives.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Candidates seem more confident when they are writing about a play in the comic genre to include useful reference to style. The comedy of manners was frequently identified explicitly but could also be recognised as implicit in appropriate performance details that were offered.

Some candidates wrote about prevailing conventions surrounding courtship, engagement and marriage and what might or might not be expected of a fiancé, when Sheridan was writing.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and did not access many of the 10 marks available.

### **Question 3**

#### ***A View from the Bridge***

**(a)** This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good and some excellent responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question's precise demands and showed real understanding of Catherine's feelings for Eddie.

There were quite a lot of answers seen where candidates wrote a more generalised answer, focused either on showing Catherine's innocent nature or commenting on the relationship between Eddie and Catherine. Candidates need to be reminded – and frequently – that material that is not focused on the precise demands of the question is not credited.

Candidates who offered pre-prepared material about Catherine and Eddie that was not shaped to the question, inevitably underachieved.

There were very many references to the National Theatre production of the play, directed by Ivo Van Hove with Mark Strong and Phoebe Fox. In this production, the unconscious, incestuous desires of Eddie are foregrounded. This question was not asking about Eddie's feelings for Catherine, but for an exploration of Catherine's feelings for Eddie; so candidates who chose to write about the relationship from the 'wrong point of view' often failed to include enough relevant material.

There were some unsuitable responses seen, where candidates chose to write about Catherine as if she was flirting consciously with her uncle, and some quite explicit suggestions were made for Catherine's inappropriate behaviour towards Eddie.

Nevertheless, there were many highly appropriate answers seen where candidates recognised the innocent 'hero-worship' of Eddie by Catherine. Some candidates even remarked on her emergence from this phase of her life as she begins to weary of Eddie's over-protectiveness of her.

There were some examples also of candidates who wrote about sections of the play outside the prescribed section because they had more to say about Catherine's feelings for Eddie towards the end of the play. While a wider understanding of the play is sometimes demonstrated where candidates write beyond the confines of the section, in not meeting the precise demands of the question, candidates waste both time and space by not confining themselves to the section that the question relates to,

- (b) This question was rarely attempted and when it was attempted it was rarely tackled with much success.

The question specifically refers to creating a setting for the action of the extract. Many candidates chose to focus exclusively on costume design and little credit could be given for a costume's ability alone to create both period and style. Without a consideration of providing an appropriate 'place' for the action to occur, candidates struggled to meet the question brief.

At times the designs offered demonstrated limited experience of theatre design and suggestions had a filmic quality to them. In some candidates' answers there were ships positioned on stage to create the suggestion of the docks and even fish swimming, in a more fanciful offering.

The Carbone apartment was also not explained in terms of a set design, candidates merely listed the furnishings required and/or indicted that things would be 'old and tatty'.

Very few candidates that answered this question considered how their designs might be appropriate to the dramatic action of the extract.

Very few answers clarified which furniture/props were typical of the period. Very few designs had illustrations/labelled diagrams.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Candidates wrote about gender equality and about the social norms of the 1940s and 50's where women did not universally seek work.

Candidates wrote about the laws surrounding immigration and the importance of the 'green card'. A secure understanding of naturalism was apparent in many answers, both implicitly and explicitly.

### **Question 4**

#### ***The Beatification of Area Boy***

No answers were seen on this play in the June series.

### **Question 5**

#### ***Small Island***

- (a) This was a very popular play; **Question (b)** attracted more candidates than **Question (a)**.

As is so frequently reported, candidates who ignored the focus of the question, fared less well than those who noticed that the question required that 'intended effects' needed to be identified before the candidate could explain how they would be achieved. Many candidates failed to identify a single effect.

Where candidates did identify their intentions, they tended to want to 'highlight the prejudice' suffered by Gilbert and others like him in a hostile environment in England. Others saw the section as a rich seam for the creation of comedy and they stated intentions to make the audience laugh at Gilbert's encounters with Arthur and Queenie – they recognised that there was nothing to laugh at in Gilbert's later encounter with the GIs.

Others wrote about wishing to establish a rapport between Gilbert and the audience.

In all cases where candidates nominated effects, there was a greater likelihood of success than in those answers that failed to give a purpose to their direction.

Some candidates focused on Gilbert's exchanges with Arthur. In some of these answers there was evidence of misunderstanding of Arthur's limitations. Most included the section with Queenie, and many omitted the section where Gilbert is confronted by the animosity of the GIs.

- (b) This question attracted more answers and there were some very good ideas for presenting an interpretation of Gilbert.

Despite some candidates overlooking this necessary aspect of the question, there were some very good responses. Most candidates interpreted Gilbert as affable and good humoured, albeit somewhat 'cocky', as some expressed it, or 'bursting with self-confidence' as expressed by others.

Gilbert's initial wariness of Arthur, which was turned to care and consideration once the 'note' to return him to Queenie was discovered, featured in most candidates' answers.

Gilbert's confidence and flirtatiousness with Queenie was sensitively handled by many, and somewhat clumsily directed by a minority of candidates.

Candidates frequently applauded Gilbert's assertiveness when dealing with the GIs, although, knowing the consequences of the altercation that leads to Arthur's death, some thought him somewhat unwise to be quite so acerbic in his situation.

### Style, Genre, Context

Surprisingly, given the amount of contextual information that there is available on the 'Windrush generation', not all candidates appeared to be equally familiar with the context.

Some mentioned the generally comic tone of some parts of the play and others wrote quite well about the original production and its blend of theatrical styles.

## SECTION B

### Question 6

#### *Oedipus Rex*

- (a) This was a minority choice, although the play itself was quite popular.

Those candidates who selected the question rarely understood that the question was not '*What are some of your designs for a production of Oedipus Rex?*' Examiners reported seeing numerous answers where the candidate concerned appeared satisfied with offering a few loosely connected design ideas for the play as if this were the set task.

The question demanded a more specific focus – the question required the candidates to use one or more design elements 'to create an appropriate atmosphere for the unfolding action in two separate sections'. So, where candidates omitted to identify any specific atmosphere, they could not succeed. Where atmosphere was mentioned, but no 'unfolding action' was referenced, they could not succeed. Success was accessible to all candidates who read the demands of the question and attempted to meet them in their answers.

In strong answers, and there were some, candidates chose contrasting atmospheres to allow them to write about different kinds of design with different potential effects/atmosphere. Some wrote about the beginning of the play where a pessimistic atmosphere is evident as Oedipus awaits the message from the oracle about how the blight upon Thebes may be lifted. Other atmospheres that were created included 'calm', 'terror', 'horror' 'revulsion'.

Some candidates wrote exclusively about lighting and sound and these ideas were frequently the most successful. Where candidates had the technical expertise to write about lighting and sound

both creatively and using appropriate technical vocabulary, some very good effects were envisaged with clear potential to create the desired atmosphere. In weaker answers, 'red' or 'blue light' or 'flickering light' filled an entire answer. Sounds of thunder were apt at times, but not where this was the sole design feature nominated.

Others chose 'costume' and struggled to link this design skill purposely to the creation of atmosphere. It created a sense of period and sometimes of status. It was capable of creating uniformity in the Chorus.

In terms of atmosphere, some candidates suggested that 'horror' could be supported by blood-stained robes after the gouging out of Oedipus' eyes and this was creditable.

- (b) Most candidates understood Creon's 'journey' and were able to draw upon practical ideas to support their ideas. However, they failed to notice the focus of the question, which did not ask for an interpretation of Creon's character, but, instead, asked candidates to nominate the audience responses that they wished to elicit from the audience through their performance of the role.

A number of candidate answers were limited by length, as they had mistimed their first answer and, consequently, their ideas were left undeveloped.

In stronger answers, candidates stated that they wished to achieve respect for Creon or distrust, or sympathy/empathy, admiration.

Most good answers included Creon's confrontation with Oedipus where Oedipus accuses him of being a traitor and they wrote about the final appearance of Creon as he speaks kindly to Oedipus, despite their earlier rift.

Some candidates failed to note that only two separate sections were required, and they wrote about a third appearance. In these cases only the strongest two sections discussed could be credited.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. This is not to say that a potted history of the development of Greek theatre was a purposeful way to approach the inclusion of SCG.

Often, marks for understanding of style were derived from sensitive design or performance detail that reflected the nature of the tragic form, and/or the delivery style most appropriate to the play.

Top level candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SGC into the body of their answers.

### **Question 7**

#### ***The Government Inspector***

Candidates should be studying a translation of Gogol's play. In this series, it was evident that some candidates had studied a modern adaptation of the play, rather than an accurate translation of it. For example, Khlestakov's 'attempt to shoot himself' does not appear in the original text.

- (a) There were a few quite strong answers to this question. There were also more numerous answers where candidates did not refer to a single specific moment from the play where Anna and Maria appeared together.

The question asked candidates to 'create comedy' from the nature of the relationship between Anna and Maria. Some candidates satisfied themselves with the observation that they are 'mother and daughter' and did not comment on the fractiousness of their relationship, on their rivalry or their bickering or their shared 'rapture' over the Government Inspector.

Some of the more successful candidates who attempted this question offered comedy routines which were inventive, and well supported. In these answers, they appeared to be the product of useful practical exploration of the play in class situations.

Unfortunately, the majority of candidates satisfied themselves with the occasional ‘pulling out’ of tongues, yawning, and eye-rolling – none of which ideas were linked to text.

- (b) This was the question more frequently attempted.

Khlestakov was often discussed with enthusiasm. Candidates enjoyed exploring his mistaken identity and many were able to discuss the comedy that could be created from this.

Most candidates understood Khlestakov’s ‘journey’ through the play as an unconscionable ‘con man’ and were able to draw upon practical ideas to support their ideas. However, many candidates failed to notice the focus of the question, which did not ask for an interpretation of Khlestakov’s character, but, instead, asked candidates to nominate the audience responses that they wished to elicit from the audience through their performance of the role.

Where candidates read the question carefully, and noted its demands, frequently intended responses ranged from ‘dislike’ at his treatment of Osip and later of the ‘ladies’ that he attempted to fool and exploit, and real enjoyment of, and laughter at, Khlestakov’s preposterous lies and success in fooling the whole town.

### Style, Genre, Context

There was some evidence of knowledge of cultural or social context in candidate’s answers in reference to the political corruption which Gogol attempted to expose within his contemporary society.

Others alluded to the play’s comic style and need for caricature, without necessarily achieving that style in their answers.

### Question 8

#### *The Cherry Orchard*

- (a) There were too few responses to this option to make very many meaningful comments.

The directorial focus was not well-handled and most of the answers seen adopted a descriptive approach to the question.

Candidates appeared not to have considered the plethora of examples of ‘unfulfilled love’ in the play and even where they had noted the theme, they appeared uncertain about how a director might convey it to the audience.

Some candidates offered descriptions of the first encounter between Dunyasha and Yasha and they did note the unhappiness of Yepikhodov once Dunyasha’s affections were clearly ‘switched’ to his more dashing rival.

Some noted Madame Ranyevskaya’s unhappiness in love – the loss of her husband and her son and her reputed bad treatment at the hands of her ‘lover’ in Paris – but as these were all events that had occurred ‘off-stage’ and in the past, it was not possible to convey these ‘love’ woes, in a practical way.

In better answers, there was a focus on Varya’s and Lopakhin’s relationship; her hopes and his apparent inability to commit to a marriage with the daughter of the house where he and his family have been serfs. The ‘non-proposal’ scene was handled quite sensitively in one or two responses seen.

- (b) This was the more popular question on *The Cherry Orchard*, and some very successful responses were seen where candidates had actually grasped the main thrust of the question and offered a well-developed interpretation of Madame Ranyevskaya.

Candidates often revealed a good understanding, and sometimes a sensitive, understanding, of Madame Ranyevskaya’s qualities – her sentimentality, her nostalgia, her inability to control her spending, her generosity and her affectionate nature. Others focused on her more negative qualities describing her as egotistical and feckless and sometimes cruel, as she is with Trofimov.



In better answers, each of the nominated qualities was interpreted practically in specific sections of action where these traits were displayed. Most candidates covered Madame Ranyevskaya's first appearance and her sentimental interaction with the Nursery and its contents. Madame Ranyevskaya's interactions with Lopakhin often featured, as did her attack on Trofimov as she waits nervously for news about the sale of the orchard.

Many candidates introduced some pertinent discussion about her role as a landowner in an age of change.

Some candidates spent rather too long on Madame Ranyevskaya's physical appearance and her costume(s) preventing them from developing their interpretation of her character through detailed examples of her interactions with others.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some understanding of style and genre could be inferred from the apparently naturalistic performances that were described, although, in some instances, negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen.

In better answers, Examiners saw candidates' breadth of understanding of Chekhov's interest in the 'winds of change' blowing through Russia's archaic feudal system and they found some opportunities – especially in answer to **Question 8a** – to include some discussion of traditional and progressive attitudes towards 'service' as evident in the play.

As in previous series, mention of a Stanislavskian approach to acting was credit-worthy, but some candidates devoted too much time and space to discussing Stanislavskian rehearsal methods, which diverted their attention from the thrust of the questions.

### **Question 9**

#### ***Blood Wedding***

(a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas for the Wife of Leonardo that would create a sympathetic response from the audience.

There were some very good answers seen to this question, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Wife's feelings, and of the style of the play, coupled with a sensitive approach to performing the role of the Wife which focused, not on her self-pity, but on her determination to be a good wife in an intolerable situation. Some sympathetic interpretations were seen.

Not all candidates allowed themselves the time to consider the implications of the question and there were several candidates who focused on the Wife's 'interrogation' of Leonardo in one section and on her argument with him about going to the wedding in the cart, alone, in the other section. This approach did not offer candidates the best opportunities to focus on the Wife's sympathetic qualities.

In better answers, focus was on the Wife's interaction with her baby as a prelude to Leonardo's return and they focused on her selfless service of her husband with cold lemonade and humility. Her protective attitude towards her cousin, the Bride, was also seen as a sympathetic quality and one that audiences would appreciate. Most candidates also depicted the Wife's grief at the end of the play where she is left, bereft of her husband, but still with a son and 'baby on the way' to consider.

The question required only two separate sections to be explored, so making the right choice of section was crucial to success. Some candidates wrote about a third appearance which had to be disregarded in favour of the two strongest sections discussed. In this instance, the two strongest sections where the Wife was presented sympathetically were credited.

- (b) Where candidates had a good knowledge of the play, the costumes were appropriate to the period and context of the play. The Bride conformed to tradition by wearing a black dress for her wedding. Examiners were open to a range of interpretations from original 1930's period costumes to a host of justified alternatives.

The problem arose when choices were not justified, and where transpositions to an indistinct suburbia in the 2020s were neither explained nor convincing.

In better answers, candidates chose to design for one of the more realistic characters, such as the Mother or the Bride and one of the 'symbolic'/surreal characters, such as Moon or Beggarwoman. Only very few designs were seen for Leonardo.

The Mother's costume was often designed to reflect the wealth of the family but also to be 'traditional' and modest and reflect her age.

The Bride's costume was also frequently thought to be demure (to meet with Mother) high-necked and long-sleeved; where the section depicting her 'elopement' with Leonardo was chosen, her once immaculate wedding dress was presented as distressed, torn and sullied by the nature of the escape.

Beggarwoman's role both in human and spectral/supernatural form was sometimes reflected in the fabrics, colour and layers of her cloak/shawl; candidates acknowledging in her costume that she is representative of Death.

Moon was the most frequently chosen character for this question; most candidates associated him/her/it with white and blue coloured light, with silver appearing in the costume of headdress or in her make-up. Frequently, candidates stated that s/he may be of any gender or combined genders; they offered costumes that suggested an 'other-worldly' presence in some way and/or were luminescent to reflect the moon.

In stronger answers, answers were always accompanied by clearly drawn and labelled sketches.

Some candidates who selected this question appeared to have but a flimsy notion of the play, its context, period or style.

In these answers, whether Bride or Mother were selected, they were designed for as if living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in an unspecified European or American setting. Brides wore white with all the associated trimmings of a conventional 'white wedding', with veils, full length skirts, strappy shoes, little posies etc.

Mothers were also attired conventionally, for middle to old age, in sensible tops and skirts, black shoes with or without heels, sometimes gloves as well as cardigans in the Andalusian sunshine.

There were some more authentic readings of the play in weaker answers, too, but in this costume designer's question, they were in the minority.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful references were made to cultural expectations about marriage in Spain during the middle of the twentieth century. The country's Catholic religion, and attitudes towards arranged marriages, its attitudes towards the sanctity of the family, towards adultery and the impossibility of divorce within the society, were all valid comments to make.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with material relating to the origin of the play – the newspaper report of the elopement of a bride with another man at her wedding, it was valid to allude to this, but not worth more than a sentence or two.

### **Question 10**

#### **Boom**

- (a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10a** being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the first appearance of Young Mother and Young Father which establishes a romantic and loving relationship. They wrote about their quarrel in Act 1, Scene 17 over Young Father's trips abroad. Some candidates noted how the scene ends, revealing Young Mother's susceptibility to Young Father's charm.

The question did not require candidates to consider only scenes where the 'couple' appear together, or even where the couple appear at all, and there was some sensitive treatment of Mother's monologue in Act 2, Scene 13 where she reveals her feelings for her once 'young' husband.

There were also some intelligent explorations of Mother's impassioned refusal to believe that her husband is now a corpse, which we see in Act 2, Scene 14.

This was sometimes matched by careful attention to Corpse's confession of his need to return 'To her' his 'young' wife.

(b) This was a minority choice.

As has been discussed in relation to a similar question on *Oedipus Rex*, above, those candidates who selected the design question, rarely understood its precise requirements.

In this instance, candidates sometimes failed to see that the required designs had to be for scenes 'where CORPSE appears'. If they offered designs for scenes where Corpse was not present, that material could not be credited. Furthermore, the question required that candidates write about a choice of design elements specifically to create 'an appropriate atmosphere' for the section. If this demand was not met, candidates' ideas were also 'off-focus'.

In strong answers candidates chose contrasting atmospheres to allow them to write about different kinds of design with different potential effects/atmosphere. Some wrote about the first appearance of Corpse being disturbing or comical. Later appearances were described as being 'shocking' or 'eerie' and the scene where Corpse relives his death was often described as being 'terrifying'.

The most successfully realised section, in design terms, was frequently taken from the end of the play, where Corpse explains his death and his vision of his wife's face, as Boon cuts down the tree – the atmosphere was identified as sentimental and touching for the audience. Some sensitive ideas for creating the dual aspect of the scene, using staging elements, lighting and sound were seen.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful reference to urbanization and the Singapore property boom was offered in this series. Candidates also referenced Singaporean identity and attitudes towards family. Themes of displacement and references to Singaporean laws about 15 years' 'tenancy' of funeral plots were generally recounted.

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Candidates appeared to find the questions on their set plays quite accessible, and many wrote detailed, practical responses to the precise focus of individual questions, which resulted in vivid realisations of the drama extract or selected sections.

Very good answers tended to demonstrate a confident understanding and use of theatrical terminology which underpinned their interpretation of a moment or section of text. These answers also incorporated apt textual support throughout.

In less successful answers, candidates revealed more limited familiarity with theatrical vocabulary, or they applied such vocabulary inaccurately or carelessly and were therefore restricted in their ability to communicate their ideas.

A notable feature of this series' responses was the reliance upon empty references to 'proxemics' which peppered some answers with no discernible benefit. Actors *move* on stage, towards or away from one another and about the stage; the concept of 'opening' or 'closing' their 'proxemics' is an artificial one and does not form a part of an actor's or director's working vocabulary. Candidates did not use the term in a way that enhanced their answers.

Candidates should also be reminded that, in **Section B**, where editions of the plays are not prescribed, they should never refer to their texts using page numbers or line numbers. They should always illustrate their ideas by using short but complete phrases or longer quotations from the set text. Use of ellipses, which was seen frequently, should also be avoided, as so often the sense of the quotation is removed and the immediacy of the unfolding moment on stage is lost.

Candidates should also never refer to characters by using a single initial (C for Catherine, E for Eddie, B for Beatrice, for example) and for the same reason. Some answers were seen this series where candidates combined the use of initials instead of character names with the use of elliptical quotations. This had the effect of making their responses hard to understand and robbed them of any sense of a fluent stage performance. It may have saved the candidates in question some time in the examination, but it always hampered clarity of expression often leading to work being incomprehensible and it seldom led to a successful response to the question.

It continued to be the case that candidates often referred, at some length, to previous productions of their chosen text, but without making any attempt to explain the connection between previous productions and their own ideas. Such references attracted little credit and took up time and space that would have been better directed towards interpretation of the play/extract in question.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed. Many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to exaggerated facial expression, stage positioning and tone of voice. It sometimes appeared that candidates did not have very much experience of watching actors at work.

Design questions attracted more subtle responses in this series. There were some enthusiastic and some successful answers on design seen in relation to a range of texts. Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element is only credit-worthy if the interpretation is closely matched to the demand of the question and is clearly justified.

When it came to SGC, many candidates made very little apparent attempt to demonstrate their knowledge or understanding of the chosen play in terms of its style, genre and context. This cost many candidates dearly, since this part of the task is worth a third of the total marks available.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

#### ***As You Like it***

(a) This was a popular play in this series.

Many candidates displayed an enthusiasm for *As You Like It* and appeared to enjoy answering this question about the creation of comedy.

Other candidates struggled to create appropriate comedy in this question. There were several answers where candidates wrote about the humour in the lines but then offered negligible ideas about how to realise the humour through directorial strategies.

Others ignored the dialogue and made suggestions for slapstick humour derived from 'falling over' or 'bumping into trees'. Not all of the suggestions made were appropriate and/or dramatically feasible; for example, more than one candidate had Rosalind struggling to cover up her 'cleavage'. One candidate suggested that a bird landing on Orlando's head would be comical.

There were some potentially comic moments created from Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede; while some did focus on her costume malfunctioning, or long hair escaping from a cap, others considered the sudden modulation of her voice from an attempt at masculinity to the trilling of a falsetto. One or two invented some 'business' with a sword buckled to her costume.

For some candidates, the idea of the characters being in the forest was deemed to be hilarious but there were few suggestions made that were capable of realising intentions.

The most successful responses often used the performers' interaction with the audience and had either Rosalind or Orlando shooting quizzical glances towards them as if eliciting their sympathy in a 'tricky' situation. Conveying Rosalind's attraction to Orlando to the audience, whilst keeping up her disguise, did provide some inventive candidates with opportunities to create comedy. Some candidates did not understand/know that Rosalind was in disguise.

Where candidates believed that Orlando had just met up with the girl, Rosalind, in the forest, after having met her at the wrestling match, the scope for comedy was reduced, and the candidate's knowledge of the play was in serious doubt.

Where candidates did know that Rosalind is in disguise, there was more scope for comedy although not always exploited. More imaginative answers included Celia in their response and made her disbelieving reactions to the encounter a source of comedy. Others omitted Celia entirely.

There were several successful responses that noted the comedy that could be derived from Rosalind's assertiveness compared with Orlando's submissiveness.

Better answers also showed an understanding of the text and how its delivery would create comedy.

- (b) This response was not as popular as **Question (a)** but tended to be more successful where candidates understood that Rosalind is in disguise and that Orlando believes that he is addressing and being addressed by a young 'swain' who tends sheep in the forest.

Candidates often emphasised the besotted nature of Orlando as regards Rosalind. These candidates believed that sympathy is due to Orlando for his obliviousness to Rosalind's stratagem.

Most candidates realised that Orlando's amiable appearance and his courtesy would help to create a sympathetic audience response as well as the sincerity of his declared affection for his (absent) love.

Less successful answers had Orlando weeping and wailing about his love in a generalised way, often believing that Rosalind was acting as herself; in many cases these ideas were not supported with specific lines of text.

Some good work was seen on Orlando's use of facial and physical expression as Rosalind 'ticked off' all of the 'marks of love' that Orlando did not possess. Orlando becoming more forlorn and insulted with every 'mark' disregarded.

There were some very careless readings of the question as well as of the character.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Those who integrated SCG material into their answer either by alluding to its comic and/or its pastoral genre or by considering Elizabethan/Jacobean notions of masculinity and/or femininity were frequently more successful in their answers than those who merely outlined Shakespeare's interest in these themes at the start of the response.

Some candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre but did not succeed in making their points relevant.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and did not access many of the 10 marks available.

## **Question 2**

### ***The Rivals***

- (a) There were very few responses seen to this question.

Most candidates who attempted it had a good understanding of the situation. They appreciated that while Faulkland's amusing 'distress' was the main feature of the scene, Acres' ignorance of the

offence that he was giving in describing Julia's 'high spirits' and Absolute's cynical enjoyment of the whole spectacle, all merited close attention from the director to create a comical scene.

Most successful, were answers that looked at the comedy created by the interaction of all three characters. Some candidates dealt with the men individually and somewhat missed the point.

Some of the more successful responses often relied on the convention of the 'aside' and/or of the actors' individual interaction with the audience, to enhance the comic potential of the unfolding events.

(b)

Some candidates implied, through their performance ideas that Faulkland is insecure and that he lacks self-awareness, that he is both possessive and jealous, but they rarely made explicit that any one of these qualities were part of Faulkland's character.

In better answers, candidates identified a character trait such as 'unreasonableness' and then used examples from the text where Faulkland exhibited this trait in abundance.

Some candidates noted Falkland's essential misogyny and expressed a wholehearted desire not to encounter such a character in their own lives.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Candidates seem more confident when they are writing about a play in the comic genre to include useful reference to style. The comedy of manners was frequently identified explicitly but could also be recognised as implicit in appropriate performance details that were offered.

Some candidates wrote about prevailing conventions surrounding courtship, engagement and marriage and what might or might not be expected of a fiancé, when Sheridan was writing.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and did not access many of the 10 marks available.

### **Question 3**

#### ***A View from the Bridge***

(a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good and some excellent responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question's precise demands and showed real understanding of Catherine's feelings for Eddie.

There were quite a lot of answers seen where candidates wrote a more generalised answer, focused either on showing Catherine's innocent nature or commenting on the relationship between Eddie and Catherine. Candidates need to be reminded – and frequently – that material that is not focused on the precise demands of the question is not credited.

Candidates who offered pre-prepared material about Catherine and Eddie that was not shaped to the question, inevitably underachieved.

There were very many references to the National Theatre production of the play, directed by Ivo Van Hove with Mark Strong and Phoebe Fox. In this production, the unconscious, incestuous desires of Eddie are foregrounded. This question was not asking about Eddie's feelings for Catherine, but for an exploration of Catherine's feelings for Eddie; so candidates who chose to write about the relationship from the 'wrong point of view' often failed to include enough relevant material.

There were some unsuitable responses seen, where candidates chose to write about Catherine as if she was flirting consciously with her uncle, and some quite explicit suggestions were made for Catherine's inappropriate behaviour towards Eddie.

Nevertheless, there were many highly appropriate answers seen where candidates recognised the innocent 'hero-worship' of Eddie by Catherine. Some candidates even remarked on her emergence from this phase of her life as she begins to weary of Eddie's over-protectiveness of her.

There were some examples also of candidates who wrote about sections of the play outside the prescribed section because they had more to say about Catherine's feelings for Eddie towards the end of the play. While a wider understanding of the play is sometimes demonstrated where candidates write beyond the confines of the section, in not meeting the precise demands of the question, candidates waste both time and space by not confining themselves to the section that the question relates to,

- (b) This question was rarely attempted and when it was attempted it was rarely tackled with much success.

The question specifically refers to creating a setting for the action of the extract. Many candidates chose to focus exclusively on costume design and little credit could be given for a costume's ability alone to create both period and style. Without a consideration of providing an appropriate 'place' for the action to occur, candidates struggled to meet the question brief.

At times the designs offered demonstrated limited experience of theatre design and suggestions had a filmic quality to them. In some candidates' answers there were ships positioned on stage to create the suggestion of the docks and even fish swimming, in a more fanciful offering.

The Carbone apartment was also not explained in terms of a set design, candidates merely listed the furnishings required and/or indicted that things would be 'old and tatty'.

Very few candidates that answered this question considered how their designs might be appropriate to the dramatic action of the extract.

Very few answers clarified which furniture/props were typical of the period. Very few designs had illustrations/labelled diagrams.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Candidates wrote about gender equality and about the social norms of the 1940s and 50's where women did not universally seek work.

Candidates wrote about the laws surrounding immigration and the importance of the 'green card'. A secure understanding of naturalism was apparent in many answers, both implicitly and explicitly.

### **Question 4**

#### ***The Beatification of Area Boy***

No answers were seen on this play in the June series.

### **Question 5**

#### ***Small Island***

- (a) This was a very popular play; **Question (b)** attracted more candidates than **Question (a)**.

As is so frequently reported, candidates who ignored the focus of the question, fared less well than those who noticed that the question required that 'intended effects' needed to be identified before the candidate could explain how they would be achieved. Many candidates failed to identify a single effect.

Where candidates did identify their intentions, they tended to want to 'highlight the prejudice' suffered by Gilbert and others like him in a hostile environment in England. Others saw the section as a rich seam for the creation of comedy and they stated intentions to make the audience laugh at Gilbert's encounters with Arthur and Queenie – they recognised that there was nothing to laugh at in Gilbert's later encounter with the GIs.



Others wrote about wishing to establish a rapport between Gilbert and the audience.

In all cases where candidates nominated effects, there was a greater likelihood of success than in those answers that failed to give a purpose to their direction.

Some candidates focused on Gilbert's exchanges with Arthur. In some of these answers there was evidence of misunderstanding of Arthur's limitations. Most included the section with Queenie, and many omitted the section where Gilbert is confronted by the animosity of the GIs.

- (b) This question attracted more answers and there were some very good ideas for presenting an interpretation of Gilbert.

Despite some candidates overlooking this necessary aspect of the question, there were some very good responses. Most candidates interpreted Gilbert as affable and good humoured, albeit somewhat 'cocky', as some expressed it, or 'bursting with self-confidence' as expressed by others.

Gilbert's initial wariness of Arthur, which was turned to care and consideration once the 'note' to return him to Queenie was discovered, featured in most candidates' answers.

Gilbert's confidence and flirtatiousness with Queenie was sensitively handled by many, and somewhat clumsily directed by a minority of candidates.

Candidates frequently applauded Gilbert's assertiveness when dealing with the GIs, although, knowing the consequences of the altercation that leads to Arthur's death, some thought him somewhat unwise to be quite so acerbic in his situation.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Surprisingly, given the amount of contextual information that there is available on the 'Windrush generation', not all candidates appeared to be equally familiar with the context.

Some mentioned the generally comic tone of some parts of the play and others wrote quite well about the original production and its blend of theatrical styles.

## **SECTION B**

### **Question 6**

#### ***Oedipus Rex***

- (a) This was a minority choice, although the play itself was quite popular.

Those candidates who selected the question rarely understood that the question was not '*What are some of your designs for a production of Oedipus Rex?*' Examiners reported seeing numerous answers where the candidate concerned appeared satisfied with offering a few loosely connected design ideas for the play as if this were the set task.

The question demanded a more specific focus – the question required the candidates to use one or more design elements 'to create an appropriate atmosphere for the unfolding action in two separate sections'. So, where candidates omitted to identify any specific atmosphere, they could not succeed. Where atmosphere was mentioned, but no 'unfolding action' was referenced, they could not succeed. Success was accessible to all candidates who read the demands of the question and attempted to meet them in their answers.

In strong answers, and there were some, candidates chose contrasting atmospheres to allow them to write about different kinds of design with different potential effects/atmosphere. Some wrote about the beginning of the play where a pessimistic atmosphere is evident as Oedipus awaits the message from the oracle about how the blight upon Thebes may be lifted. Other atmospheres that were created included 'calm', 'terror', 'horror' 'revulsion'.

Some candidates wrote exclusively about lighting and sound and these ideas were frequently the most successful. Where candidates had the technical expertise to write about lighting and sound

both creatively and using appropriate technical vocabulary, some very good effects were envisaged with clear potential to create the desired atmosphere. In weaker answers, 'red' or 'blue light' or 'flickering light' filled an entire answer. Sounds of thunder were apt at times, but not where this was the sole design feature nominated.

Others chose 'costume' and struggled to link this design skill purposely to the creation of atmosphere. It created a sense of period and sometimes of status. It was capable of creating uniformity in the Chorus.

In terms of atmosphere, some candidates suggested that 'horror' could be supported by blood-stained robes after the gouging out of Oedipus' eyes and this was creditable.

- (b) Most candidates understood Creon's 'journey' and were able to draw upon practical ideas to support their ideas. However, they failed to notice the focus of the question, which did not ask for an interpretation of Creon's character, but, instead, asked candidates to nominate the audience responses that they wished to elicit from the audience through their performance of the role.

A number of candidate answers were limited by length, as they had mistimed their first answer and, consequently, their ideas were left undeveloped.

In stronger answers, candidates stated that they wished to achieve respect for Creon or distrust, or sympathy/empathy, admiration.

Most good answers included Creon's confrontation with Oedipus where Oedipus accuses him of being a traitor and they wrote about the final appearance of Creon as he speaks kindly to Oedipus, despite their earlier rift.

Some candidates failed to note that only two separate sections were required, and they wrote about a third appearance. In these cases only the strongest two sections discussed could be credited.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. This is not to say that a potted history of the development of Greek theatre was a purposeful way to approach the inclusion of SCG.

Often, marks for understanding of style were derived from sensitive design or performance detail that reflected the nature of the tragic form, and/or the delivery style most appropriate to the play.

Top level candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SGC into the body of their answers.

### **Question 7**

#### ***The Government Inspector***

Candidates should be studying a translation of Gogol's play. In this series, it was evident that some candidates had studied a modern adaptation of the play, rather than an accurate translation of it. For example, Khlestakov's 'attempt to shoot himself' does not appear in the original text.

- (a) There were a few quite strong answers to this question. There were also more numerous answers where candidates did not refer to a single specific moment from the play where Anna and Maria appeared together.

The question asked candidates to 'create comedy' from the nature of the relationship between Anna and Maria. Some candidates satisfied themselves with the observation that they are 'mother and daughter' and did not comment on the fractiousness of their relationship, on their rivalry or their bickering or their shared 'rapture' over the Government Inspector.

Some of the more successful candidates who attempted this question offered comedy routines which were inventive, and well supported. In these answers, they appeared to be the product of useful practical exploration of the play in class situations.

Unfortunately, the majority of candidates satisfied themselves with the occasional ‘pulling out’ of tongues, yawning, and eye-rolling – none of which ideas were linked to text.

- (b) This was the question more frequently attempted.

Khlestakov was often discussed with enthusiasm. Candidates enjoyed exploring his mistaken identity and many were able to discuss the comedy that could be created from this.

Most candidates understood Khlestakov’s ‘journey’ through the play as an unconscionable ‘con man’ and were able to draw upon practical ideas to support their ideas. However, many candidates failed to notice the focus of the question, which did not ask for an interpretation of Khlestakov’s character, but, instead, asked candidates to nominate the audience responses that they wished to elicit from the audience through their performance of the role.

Where candidates read the question carefully, and noted its demands, frequently intended responses ranged from ‘dislike’ at his treatment of Osip and later of the ‘ladies’ that he attempted to fool and exploit, and real enjoyment of, and laughter at, Khlestakov’s preposterous lies and success in fooling the whole town.

### Style, Genre, Context

There was some evidence of knowledge of cultural or social context in candidate’s answers in reference to the political corruption which Gogol attempted to expose within his contemporary society.

Others alluded to the play’s comic style and need for caricature, without necessarily achieving that style in their answers.

### Question 8

#### *The Cherry Orchard*

- (a) There were too few responses to this option to make very many meaningful comments.

The directorial focus was not well-handled and most of the answers seen adopted a descriptive approach to the question.

Candidates appeared not to have considered the plethora of examples of ‘unfulfilled love’ in the play and even where they had noted the theme, they appeared uncertain about how a director might convey it to the audience.

Some candidates offered descriptions of the first encounter between Dunyasha and Yasha and they did note the unhappiness of Yepikhodov once Dunyasha’s affections were clearly ‘switched’ to his more dashing rival.

Some noted Madame Ranyevskaya’s unhappiness in love – the loss of her husband and her son and her reputed bad treatment at the hands of her ‘lover’ in Paris – but as these were all events that had occurred ‘off-stage’ and in the past, it was not possible to convey these ‘love’ woes, in a practical way.

In better answers, there was a focus on Varya’s and Lopakhin’s relationship; her hopes and his apparent inability to commit to a marriage with the daughter of the house where he and his family have been serfs. The ‘non-proposal’ scene was handled quite sensitively in one or two responses seen.

- (b) This was the more popular question on *The Cherry Orchard*, and some very successful responses were seen where candidates had actually grasped the main thrust of the question and offered a well-developed interpretation of Madame Ranyevskaya.

Candidates often revealed a good understanding, and sometimes a sensitive, understanding, of Madame Ranyevskaya’s qualities – her sentimentality, her nostalgia, her inability to control her spending, her generosity and her affectionate nature. Others focused on her more negative qualities describing her as egotistical and feckless and sometimes cruel, as she is with Trofimov.

In better answers, each of the nominated qualities was interpreted practically in specific sections of action where these traits were displayed. Most candidates covered Madame Ranyevskaya's first appearance and her sentimental interaction with the Nursery and its contents. Madame Ranyevskaya's interactions with Lopakhin often featured, as did her attack on Trofimov as she waits nervously for news about the sale of the orchard.

Many candidates introduced some pertinent discussion about her role as a landowner in an age of change.

Some candidates spent rather too long on Madame Ranyevskaya's physical appearance and her costume(s) preventing them from developing their interpretation of her character through detailed examples of her interactions with others.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some understanding of style and genre could be inferred from the apparently naturalistic performances that were described, although, in some instances, negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen.

In better answers, Examiners saw candidates' breadth of understanding of Chekhov's interest in the 'winds of change' blowing through Russia's archaic feudal system and they found some opportunities – especially in answer to **Question 8a** – to include some discussion of traditional and progressive attitudes towards 'service' as evident in the play.

As in previous series, mention of a Stanislavskian approach to acting was credit-worthy, but some candidates devoted too much time and space to discussing Stanislavskian rehearsal methods, which diverted their attention from the thrust of the questions.

### **Question 9**

#### ***Blood Wedding***

(a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas for the Wife of Leonardo that would create a sympathetic response from the audience.

There were some very good answers seen to this question, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Wife's feelings, and of the style of the play, coupled with a sensitive approach to performing the role of the Wife which focused, not on her self-pity, but on her determination to be a good wife in an intolerable situation. Some sympathetic interpretations were seen.

Not all candidates allowed themselves the time to consider the implications of the question and there were several candidates who focused on the Wife's 'interrogation' of Leonardo in one section and on her argument with him about going to the wedding in the cart, alone, in the other section. This approach did not offer candidates the best opportunities to focus on the Wife's sympathetic qualities.

In better answers, focus was on the Wife's interaction with her baby as a prelude to Leonardo's return and they focused on her selfless service of her husband with cold lemonade and humility. Her protective attitude towards her cousin, the Bride, was also seen as a sympathetic quality and one that audiences would appreciate. Most candidates also depicted the Wife's grief at the end of the play where she is left, bereft of her husband, but still with a son and 'baby on the way' to consider.

The question required only two separate sections to be explored, so making the right choice of section was crucial to success. Some candidates wrote about a third appearance which had to be disregarded in favour of the two strongest sections discussed. In this instance, the two strongest sections where the Wife was presented sympathetically were credited.

- (b) Where candidates had a good knowledge of the play, the costumes were appropriate to the period and context of the play. The Bride conformed to tradition by wearing a black dress for her wedding. Examiners were open to a range of interpretations from original 1930's period costumes to a host of justified alternatives.

The problem arose when choices were not justified, and where transpositions to an indistinct suburbia in the 2020s were neither explained nor convincing.

In better answers, candidates chose to design for one of the more realistic characters, such as the Mother or the Bride and one of the 'symbolic'/surreal characters, such as Moon or Beggarwoman. Only very few designs were seen for Leonardo.

The Mother's costume was often designed to reflect the wealth of the family but also to be 'traditional' and modest and reflect her age.

The Bride's costume was also frequently thought to be demure (to meet with Mother) high-necked and long-sleeved; where the section depicting her 'elopement' with Leonardo was chosen, her once immaculate wedding dress was presented as distressed, torn and sullied by the nature of the escape.

Beggarwoman's role both in human and spectral/supernatural form was sometimes reflected in the fabrics, colour and layers of her cloak/shawl; candidates acknowledging in her costume that she is representative of Death.

Moon was the most frequently chosen character for this question; most candidates associated him/her/it with white and blue coloured light, with silver appearing in the costume of headdress or in her make-up. Frequently, candidates stated that s/he may be of any gender or combined genders; they offered costumes that suggested an 'other-worldly' presence in some way and/or were luminescent to reflect the moon.

In stronger answers, answers were always accompanied by clearly drawn and labelled sketches.

Some candidates who selected this question appeared to have but a flimsy notion of the play, its context, period or style.

In these answers, whether Bride or Mother were selected, they were designed for as if living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in an unspecified European or American setting. Brides wore white with all the associated trimmings of a conventional 'white wedding', with veils, full length skirts, strappy shoes, little posies etc.

Mothers were also attired conventionally, for middle to old age, in sensible tops and skirts, black shoes with or without heels, sometimes gloves as well as cardigans in the Andalusian sunshine.

There were some more authentic readings of the play in weaker answers, too, but in this costume designer's question, they were in the minority.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful references were made to cultural expectations about marriage in Spain during the middle of the twentieth century. The country's Catholic religion, and attitudes towards arranged marriages, its attitudes towards the sanctity of the family, towards adultery and the impossibility of divorce within the society, were all valid comments to make.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with material relating to the origin of the play – the newspaper report of the elopement of a bride with another man at her wedding, it was valid to allude to this, but not worth more than a sentence or two.

### **Question 10**

#### **Boom**

- (a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10a** being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the first appearance of Young Mother and Young Father which establishes a romantic and loving relationship. They wrote about their quarrel in Act 1, Scene 17 over Young Father's trips abroad. Some candidates noted how the scene ends, revealing Young Mother's susceptibility to Young Father's charm.

The question did not require candidates to consider only scenes where the 'couple' appear together, or even where the couple appear at all, and there was some sensitive treatment of Mother's monologue in Act 2, Scene 13 where she reveals her feelings for her once 'young' husband.

There were also some intelligent explorations of Mother's impassioned refusal to believe that her husband is now a corpse, which we see in Act 2, Scene 14.

This was sometimes matched by careful attention to Corpse's confession of his need to return 'To her' his 'young' wife.

(b) This was a minority choice.

As has been discussed in relation to a similar question on *Oedipus Rex*, above, those candidates who selected the design question, rarely understood its precise requirements.

In this instance, candidates sometimes failed to see that the required designs had to be for scenes 'where CORPSE appears'. If they offered designs for scenes where Corpse was not present, that material could not be credited. Furthermore, the question required that candidates write about a choice of design elements specifically to create 'an appropriate atmosphere' for the section. If this demand was not met, candidates' ideas were also 'off-focus'.

In strong answers candidates chose contrasting atmospheres to allow them to write about different kinds of design with different potential effects/atmosphere. Some wrote about the first appearance of Corpse being disturbing or comical. Later appearances were described as being 'shocking' or 'eerie' and the scene where Corpse relives his death was often described as being 'terrifying'.

The most successfully realised section, in design terms, was frequently taken from the end of the play, where Corpse explains his death and his vision of his wife's face, as Boon cuts down the tree – the atmosphere was identified as sentimental and touching for the audience. Some sensitive ideas for creating the dual aspect of the scene, using staging elements, lighting and sound were seen.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful reference to urbanization and the Singapore property boom was offered in this series. Candidates also referenced Singaporean identity and attitudes towards family. Themes of displacement and references to Singaporean laws about 15 years' 'tenancy' of funeral plots were generally recounted.

# DRAMA

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<p><b>Paper 9482/13</b> <b>Open-Book Written Examination</b></p>
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## Key messages

This syllabus is now well-established, although 2024 sees the first examination based on ‘new’ prescribed texts.

Component 1 of this AS/A Level syllabus in Drama assesses candidates’ knowledge and understanding of how Drama may be interpreted, on stage, to communicate meaning to an audience. Candidates need to have a working knowledge of how plays are staged in the professional theatre.

While a literary understanding of themes and characters may be useful to candidates, Component 1 of the Drama syllabus assesses candidates’ knowledge and understanding of practical theatre, and it is imperative that candidates have had experience – both theoretical and practical – of the application of the skills of a director, a performer and/or a designer to their selected texts.

## General comments

There were very many very good, and some outstanding, responses to a range of question in this June series.

In this series, candidates mainly answered questions on *A View from the Bridge* and *Small Island* in **Section A** and on *Blood Wedding* and *Boom* in **Section B**.

*As You Like It*, *Oedipus Rex* and *The Cherry Orchard* were also represented as tiny minority choices with insufficient responses on these texts to make it possible to make meaningful observations about candidate achievement.

Candidates appeared to find the questions on their set plays quite accessible, and many wrote detailed, practical responses to the precise focus of individual questions, which resulted in vivid realisations of the drama extract or selected sections.

Very good answers tended to demonstrate a confident understanding and use of theatrical terminology which underpinned their interpretation of a moment or section of text. These answers also incorporated apt textual support throughout.

In less successful answers, candidates revealed more limited familiarity with theatrical vocabulary, or they applied such vocabulary inaccurately or carelessly and were thus restricted in their ability to communicate their ideas.

A notable feature of this series’ responses was the reliance upon empty references to ‘proxemics’ which peppered some answers with no discernible benefit. Actors *move* on stage, towards or away from one another and about the stage; the concept of ‘opening’ or ‘closing’ their ‘proxemics’ is an artificial one and does not form a part of an actor’s or director’s working vocabulary. Candidates did not use the term in a way that enhanced their answers.

Candidates should also be reminded that, in **Section B**, where editions of the plays are not prescribed, they should never refer to their texts using page numbers or line numbers. They should always illustrate their ideas by using short but complete phrases or longer quotations from the set text. Use of ellipses, which was seen frequently in this series’ responses, should also be avoided, as so frequently the sense of the quotation is removed and the immediacy of the unfolding moment on stage is lost.

Candidates should also never refer to characters by using a single initial (C for Catherine, E for Eddie, B for Beatrice, for example) and for the same reason. Some answers were seen this series where candidates combined the use of initials instead of character names with the use of elliptical quotations. This had the effect of making their responses hard to understand and robbed them of any sense of a fluent stage performance. It may have saved the candidates in question some time in the examination, but it always hampered clarity of expression often leading to work being incomprehensible and it seldom led to a successful response to the question.

It continued to be the case that candidates often referred, at some length, to previous productions of their chosen text, but without making any attempt to explain the connection between previous productions and their own ideas. Such references attracted little credit and take up time and space that would have been better directed towards interpretation of the play/extract in question.

## **Section A**

### ***Death of a Salesman***

#### **Question 3**

##### **(a)**

There were some accomplished responses to the question that revealed some sensitivity in the direction of Eddie and Beatrice, in the prescribed extract, that were fully focused on highlighting their individual concerns about Catherine's future.

Most acknowledged Eddie's personal investment in Catherine and offered a balanced assessment of his genuine 'paternal' concern that Catherine may be being exploited by Rodolpho; tainted by his unacknowledged possessiveness of his niece and possibly by his subconscious desire for her.

Some candidates focused solely on Eddie's unhealthy interest in Catherine's life and her future and missed the complexity of Miller's presentation of the relationship between Catherine and Eddie.

Candidates often saw Beatrice's attitude towards Catherine as being wholly benign and 'motherly'. These candidates offered too simplistic an interpretation of Beatrice's 'concern' and often failed to see how Catherine's choices about her 'future', especially in relation to marriage to Rodolpho, had the potential to solve or to intensify Beatrice's problems of intimacy with Eddie.

As always, the best answers were those that were focused and well supported from the text, with detailed directions for Eddie and Beatrice.

##### **(b)**

There were too few responses to this option to draw many inferences.

Candidates tended not to focus on the idea of Catherine's 'bewilderment', instead launching into more familiar territory of Catherine's relationship with Eddie. As with any question, where candidates attempt to adapt pre-prepared material, there were several answers seen where focus was awry. This not only reduced candidate's ability to construct a coherent argument – based on Catherine's bewilderment- but also lead candidates to select supporting performance detail that was not fully relevant to the focus of the question.

### **Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful references were made to the immigration laws in America in the middle of the twentieth century. There were also references to living standards for the working classes and to the fact that women were only coming into the labour force as a consequence of the second world war.

### ***Small Island***

#### **Question 5**

##### **(a)**

This was the more popular of the two questions and it was often very successfully tackled. Most candidates appreciated that Celia and Hortense start out as 'best of friends' but that the relationship sours due to Hortense's dislike of being patronised by Celia and her resentment of Celia's opportunity of a 'new life' in England. Directorial suggestions reflected the gradual deterioration of the relationship over the brief span of the extract.



Most candidates appreciated that although, initially, Hortense and Celia enter the stage arm-in-arm, signalling their close friendship, Hortense is already growing weary and a little irritated by Celia's constant chatter about Gilbert, her boyfriend.

In developed answers, candidates picked up on Hortense's use of sarcasm with Celia. They also offered useful directions for showing Hortense's frustration as she rolls her eyes or occupies herself with looking in the other direction when Celia rambles on about her beau.

Most candidates recognised that when Celia is fantasising about London with Gilbert, and expressing her certainty that Hortense will cover for her, Hortense's patience is wearing thin. There were some useful ideas for using pause and a shift in eye-line to express Hortense planning her 'revenge' on Celia for her presumption to express sympathy for her.

Most candidates, though understanding Hortense's motives, seemed to revel in the moment when Celia slaps Hortense across the face, effectively bringing their friendship to an abrupt and painful end. Good candidates offered sound direction for each of girls at the moment of impact and its aftermath.

Better answers always contain good practical detail and quotation to support ideas.

**(b)**

There were very few answers on this option. Some candidates did not answer the question in its own terms and failed to offer any suggestions for how they wanted the audience to respond to Gilbert although they offered evidence of having understood the role.

Where candidates did nominate responses, they invariably wanted their audience to like Gilbert for his cheerfulness and his sense of humour. Some said they wanted the audience's respect for his determination to find a 'better' life. Some spoke of his facial expression being always smiling and other of a perpetual 'twinkle in his eyes'.

Some candidates offered useful performance suggestions for conveying Gilbert's apparently 'happy-go-lucky' temperament but were also aware of the need to show his compassion for Celia when the facts about her 'mad mother' are revealed by Hortense. Candidates saw this as an admirable trait in terms of audience response.

Some candidates, moved beyond the confines of the extract, to insist that Gilbert deserved sympathy as his hopes for the future were to be frustrated by the realities which faced the 'Windrush' generation. Questions in **Section A** always require a focus on the prescribed section, so it was unhelpful to consider audience response to events that occur later in the play.

**Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful references were made to the Windrush generation and to the way in which the British Empire exploited the citizens of the commonwealth both before, during and after the world wars that blighted the middle part of the twentieth century.

There were also references to living standards in Jamaica during this period as well as to widespread racial discrimination.

**Section B**

***Blood Wedding***

**Question 9**

**(a)**

Of the small number of answers to this question, only a couple focused closely on the terms of the question. Although there appeared to be an understanding of Leonardo's coldness towards his wife and his contrasting ardour for the BRIDE, ideas for conveying the contrast were underdeveloped.

Choice of section, as always was a crucial factor in determining success. Most successful choices were Leonardo's first scene with the Wife in Act One, Scene Two, where the Wife is quite docile, and he responds to her legitimate questions aggressively. Candidates offered some useful performance ideas for showing the hurtful indifference towards the Wife's feelings that Leonardo displays.

When candidates then compared Leonardo's performance, in this scene, with his appearance with the Bride in Act Three, some very good work came out of the comparison.

Candidates referred to the contrast not only between the physical closeness between Leonardo and the Bride, compared to the physical distance between Leonardo and the Wife, but also in terms of eye-contact and tactility.

Better answers used the text consistently and used reference to Leonardo's delivery of that text to clearly convey his different feelings for the two women to the audience.

**(b)**

This was the more popular option on **Blood Wedding**. Some candidates did not answer the question in its own terms and failed to offer any suggestions for how they wanted the audience to respond to the Mother, although most appeared to have understood the role.

Where candidates did nominate responses, opinions were divided. Some candidates wanted a fully sympathetic response to her situation throughout the play from her initial expression of fears for the life of her only remaining son to the terrible conclusion when her fears are realised, and he is brought home dead.

Others had little patience for the continuous obsession of the Mother with knives and with death and they filtered their frustration with her into nominating a negative response from the audience.

Some of these responses were intelligently written and well supported and persuasive. Others offered inadequate detail about how the performer might elicit negative response given that Mother's intentions are so good and her fate so wretched.

Performance suggestions were not especially inventive in answer to this question, nor were they always adequately supported from the text.

As always, better answers used the text consistently and used reference to Leonardo's delivery of that text to clearly convey his different feelings for the two women to the audience.

**Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful references were made to cultural expectations about marriage in Spain during the middle of the twentieth century. The country's Catholic religion, and attitudes towards arranged marriages, its attitudes towards the sanctity of the family, towards adultery and the impossibility of divorce within the society, were all valid comments to make.

**Boom**

**Question 10**

**(a)**

There were some very good answers to this question. Candidates really seemed to appreciate the inter-generational tension between Boon and his Mother; founded, as it becomes increasingly clear, on a genuine and mutual affection.

Candidates pointed out that because of the way that the play is structured, the nature of the relationship unfolds as the play proceeds. In good answers there were some useful strategies offered for revealing the sincere affection that exists between mother and son, despite their low-level bickering about the 'move' that Mother does not want to make.

Some candidates noted that, as aspects of Boon's childhood are revealed and Mother's situation becomes more perilous, the bond between them is also strengthened. Candidates often used both vocal and physical detail to show the way the relationship changes after Boon deals with the aggressive neighbour.

Most candidates chose an early scene where there was some escalating tension between them, leading to Boon moving out and almost all of the candidates who chose this option referred to the emotional reconciliation scene in Act 2, Scene 19 where Mother accepts the inevitable and appreciates Boon retrieving the Fig tree.

As always, better answers used the text consistently and used reference to both vocal and physical qualities in conveying the nature of the relationship between Boon and Mother.

**(b)**

Very few candidates attempted this question.

There was evidence of a rather superficial understanding of Jeremiah, although candidates did attempt to interpret him.

Most frequently he was described as being empathetic and quite considerate to Corpse. Others noted how kindly he is, both to Corpse and to Mother and how he shows filial duty in his honouring of his parents' memory.

**Style, Genre, Context**

Some useful reference to urbanization and the Singapore property boom was offered in this series. Candidates also referenced Singaporean identity and attitudes towards family.

# DRAMA

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<p><b>Paper 9482/02</b> <b>Practical Drama</b></p>
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## Key messages

- The careful choice of repertoire extract is vital if candidates are to be successful in their scripted piece. It is important not to make the decision about which extract too quickly but to try out a small number of possibilities first. This is to ensure that all candidates have reasonably equal exposure in the extract and to gauge the groups' reactions to different styles of drama.
- There is an expectation that candidates will have developed a high level of acting skills during their course of study and that they will have become familiar with techniques of rehearsal appropriate to achieving this. There is a very clear distinction between the performance standards expected for A Level and that of IGCSE.
- Devised pieces for this examination should be concise, focused and communicate immediately to their audience. Candidates should practice shaping their devised work in order to communicate effectively to an audience. A short, devised piece is not the place to hatch complicated plots or introduce more characters than necessary.

## **Administration**

Most Centres provided a well-organised submission, which fulfilled the requirements of the syllabus. The ICMS forms were correctly uploaded as a **single pdf document** and the recordings were of a suitable quality such that the moderator could see and hear the contributions of all candidates. There were, however, a number of administrative errors that are listed below in order to assist Centres to avoid making them in future.

- Many ICMS forms contained clerical errors **and/or** the totals were incorrectly transferred to Submit for Assessment.
- Comments on the ICMS were brief or copied and pasted for a number of candidates who had been awarded different marks. Teachers are reminded that they should use examples from candidate's practical work to illustrate how the marking criteria have been addressed. In extreme examples, no comments were made at all, which is not acceptable.
- In some instances, all candidates had been awarded the same mark, but the ICMS forms contained very different comments. If marks are the same or are very closely bunched, teachers should check that no differentiators have been overlooked.
- Some recordings were very poor, especially in the quality of sound recording. This was often because the microphone was too far away from the performance area, or because the acoustics of the performance space were especially resonant.
- Many candidates failed to identify themselves to camera before the performance began. It is vital that there is a line-up of candidates, in costume, who each announce themselves to camera before the piece begins. It is also essential to include a brief description of each candidate's appearance on the ICMS form.

## **Devised Piece (30 marks)**

The assessment details are set out in the syllabus and Centres are reminded of these details, since a significant number of Centres over-marked the devised pieces.

The assessment consists of the group performance piece (20 marks) assessed under AO2 (Devising). Of these 20 marks, 5 marks are available for the use of the stimulus and a further 15 marks for the ensemble, structure and role. Candidates also submit a spoken self-evaluation (10 marks), assessed under AO4 (Analysing and Evaluating). Centres are requested to give as much detail as possible about the devised piece as moderators sometimes found it challenging to work out details without this element of guidance.

Many candidates chose historical events or culturally relevant stories they were passionate about as a stimulus. The quality of research that these candidates had completed gave their pieces substance and gravitas. There were a number of very strong performances that had a clear sense of purpose, with well-drawn characterisations and a clear shaped story. This was often linked to the group's ability to create a purposeful structure that was neither bitty nor undifferentiated. It was noticeable that most very good pieces had a strong sense of physicality and that the work had been devised through practical workshop interaction, rather than as a scriptwriting exercise.

There were many pieces that had almost nothing to communicate. This was evident in a variety of ways: too much static delivery seated at tables, trite dialogue that lacked credibility, incomplete characters that seemed to operate in an entirely predictable manner, and/or very constrained physicality. There was a tendency to show characters interacting in a static moment with no range of gestures, or actions. In performance, almost all of these weaker pieces lacked pace and energy or, indeed, very much sense of physical interaction between group members. In short, this approach to the work gave the impression of having been conceived for television rather than for the stage and was, therefore, not suited to the task required by the syllabus.

### **Self-Evaluation**

There was a slight improvement in the work seen in June 2024 and more candidates gave the impression of understanding what was required in this activity. There were fewer candidates who read from a script this year and there was a far better understanding of the format of the spoken evaluation.

Most evaluations kept to the three-minute maximum and the strongest submissions focused on the statements set out in the syllabus. The intention of the devised piece was articulated clearly, and the candidate's contributions evaluated in an analytical and purposeful manner. Some candidates attempted to speak as quickly as possible in order to pack in as many words as possible within the three minutes. This was generally unhelpful and tended to take away from the delivery any sense of explaining to a listener the strengths and weaknesses of what had taken place. At the other extreme, there were some very slow presentations, where candidates were clearly reading from prompt cards or an autocue.

### **Scripted piece**

The assessment consists of a group scripted performance piece worth 30 marks, assessed under AO3 (Performing). These 30 marks are subdivided into Interpretation and Performance Skills (15 marks) and Communication (15 marks). Many candidates scored similar marks for both sets of criteria, which was a good indication that they had taken a holistic approach to the preparation of repertoire, considering fully the message they intended to communicate and the necessary technique to achieve it.

The strongest performances demonstrated an ability to get to grips with bringing a performance text to life on stage, especially given the challenge of only performing an extract rather than the entire play. Many candidates rose to this challenge, however, and were able to build their character to such an extent that it made impact from the very first moment of the performance and was sustained throughout.

One major differentiator between group performances was the appropriateness of the casting. In an examination piece, candidates should not think in terms of how large or small a role is. In fact, the ideal extract should allow broadly equal measure of exposure for all candidates. Moderators reported, however, that they saw pieces where one candidate dominated the entire performance, having landed what they clearly saw as the leading role in the play. That inevitably meant that the other group members could play little more than walk-on parts and had limited opportunity to demonstrate their performance skills. Another questionable decision was where an extract had been chosen in which there was relatively little action, which tended to encourage low levels of energy and a filmic approach to communicating emotion.

As in previous sessions, Centres are strongly reminded that the school play or musical cannot be used for this assessment since a maximum of six candidates are allowed in the performance. Centres who submit the school show run the risk of submitting work that does not meet the criteria for assessment.

### Indicative list or performance texts

The following list provides examples of performance texts seen by moderators in June 2024. They are provided for information and there is no requirement for Centres to use any of them for their own work, although they may consider doing so if they wish.

Edward Albee	<i>Three Tall Women</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>
Deborah Bruce	<i>Dixon and Daughters</i>
John Cariani	<i>Almost Maine</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Two</i>
Anton Chekhov	<i>Uncle Vanya</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Nick Dear	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Euripides	<i>Medea</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
Stephen Gregg	<i>Why we like Love Stories</i>
Lauren Gunderson	<i>The Revolutionists</i>
Debbie Isitt	<i>The Woman Who Cooked her Husband</i>
David Ives	<i>Sure Thing</i>
Oliver Lansley	<i>Immaculate</i>
David Lindsay Abaire	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>
Federico Garcia Lorca	<i>The House of Bernada Alba</i>
Ken Ludwig	<i>Leading Ladies</i>
Robert Luxford	<i>Cashless</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Don Nigro	<i>Barefoot in Nightgown by Candlelight</i>
Marsha Norman	<i>Night Mother</i>
Nick Payne	<i>Constellations</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>The Dumb Waiter</i>
J.B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Mark Ravenhill	<i>Pool, (no Water)</i>
Yasmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Jean-Paul Satre	<i>No Exit</i>
John Patrick Shanley	<i>Women of Manhattan</i>
Neil Simon	<i>Barefoot in the Park</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>The Memory of Water</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>
Jessica Swale	<i>Blue Stockings</i> <i>Nell Gwynn</i> <i>Thomas Tallis</i>
Polly Teale	<i>Bronte</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Amanda Whittington	<i>Be My Baby</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> <i>The Pink Bedroom</i>

# DRAMA

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<p><b>Paper 9482/03</b> <b>Theatre-Making and Performing</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

- Candidates are advised to spend proportionate amounts of time on each of the two performance activities: one group devised performance to a maximum of 20 minutes in length with written evaluation worth 66 per cent of marks, and one individual selection of texts linked by theme worth 33 per cent of marks of 6–8 minutes in length.
- The most successful performances of group devised performance carefully investigated one work of a chosen practitioner, tradition or style and identified and applied the distinctive traits rigorously.
- Individual presentations were most successful which selected an appropriate dramatic style for the performance needs of their presentations, with clear linking material devised by the candidate introducing each text in turn and relating those texts to the chosen theme.
- In the written evaluation of group devised performance, the focus of the analysis must be on the process of devising and on the individual's contribution to the outcome.
- In individual performance candidates should seek to present a programme of texts on a chosen theme. The programme should be constructed using links devised by the candidate as part of the assessed performance, i.e., a brief introduction for each text to identify it and link it to the theme and to the other texts.
- As an internally marked and externally moderated component, centres must provide Cambridge with all the required materials necessary for moderation; all video material must be checked as working in any current playback device.

## **General comments**

It was not always clear in the video record that a live audience was present even where the teacher-assessor's ICMS commentary supported marking with reference to the candidate's performance having engaged the audience. This was particularly the case in the submissions of Individual presentations from some centres. Without an audience for the performance, the performer or performers lack reciprocating responses to provide impetus to the presentation.

Most submitted performances were within the stated time limit although some considerably exceeded the maximum length stated in the syllabus. It is for candidates to shape the material to the syllabus requirements for both the Individual and Group Performances. Candidates should be made aware that overlong pieces may be self-penalising; the discipline of creating a performance should include the time frame for the performers to work to. Candidates should be made aware also that centres should not include in their marking any performance material which is beyond the maximum 15–20 minutes for Group Devised performance and 6–8 minutes for individual performance, as stated in the syllabus.

There were a few instances of group pieces including non-assessed performers where this was clearly not essential. The minimum number for devising is two. In Individual performance there should be no other person or persons engaging in the dramatic action. There were instances of external voices, live or recorded, speaking to or in dialogue with the performer. This is not appropriate.

It is a requirement that the ICMS forms should include clear identifying features of performers for the Group Devised piece in the space provided. Listing only roles undertaken in the space provided on the form does not make candidates identifiable at the outset of the recording. It is also helpful to moderation for candidates to introduce themselves at the start of the performance, clearly stating their name and candidate number.

Where captioning technology was available to centres, this was particularly helpful in group pieces with multiple performers on stage.

There were administrative issues in submissions from a significant number of centres, both of missing or incomplete documentation and missing, incorrect or non-working video files. For moderation to take place, the ICMS must be completed in full, and centres must provide a Group Devised Cover Sheet for each group, completed by the teacher-assessor. It must be submitted to inform the moderator of the investigation of the professional production that was investigated, into one of the listed practitioners, traditions or styles, and from which the candidates have drawn the distinctive traits for their own devising and include an account of activities undertaken to develop the devised piece.

Centres should apply the assessment criteria for the band awarded for each element of the marking and include some reference to these on the ICMS forms, but not solely citing the wording from the syllabus; some individual commentary is also desirable to show where credit has been awarded. Some specific comment on individual contribution to devising should also be provided. Copied and pasted comments on group devising and/or individual presentation offers little to distinguish those candidates' individual part in creating the work.

There were a number of instances where the centre had not listed all individual texts on the ICMS form. It is essential to list all individual texts for performance, and in order of performance. Where some were omitted, and where the candidate had not included the required links to introduce texts, it was not always clear to the moderator what texts had been selected and how many were being performed when viewing the video recording. Moderation was particularly difficult in those instances where the theme could only be inferred from the tone and content of the texts.

The majority of centres submitted candidate performance work on USB memory sticks, which is highly recommended. DVD submissions were also seen. Some were received where the files would not open and play. Centres should check that a USB file opens normally and is transferable between devices. USB is preferable as not all of the diverse formats of DVD playback are universally accessible.

Some poor video and sound recording sometimes impeded moderation again this session, with bright stage lighting sometimes blurring facial features. Centres should always check the quality of camera and sound recording both before and after making the examination recording. Candidates should always be afforded a quiet and appropriate space for performance as for any examination, without background sounds. In video recording, the candidate(s) should always be in full body view in performance.

Candidates reading from a script in any part of their group or individual performance are limited to Level 2 for role and/or performance skills.

### **Comments on specific tasks**

#### **Devised Performance and Evaluation (40 marks)**

##### *Devising*

Some highly creditable work was seen across the range of styles particularly where groups had taken care to create full roles for all members of the ensemble. There were good examples seen of performances in the style of Absurdist Theatre, Brecht, and Frantic Assembly.

The selection of an appropriate professional production for the investigation is the essential starting point for the devising process. It must offer candidates as close as possible an example of the practitioner, tradition or style for devising. A broadly or generally relevant work is unlikely to lead to very good group devising for the purposes of this component. The production should not be taken simply as a stimulus to general devising: it should be the subject of careful analysis to identify the key elements of that practitioner, style or tradition to be applied in candidates' own devising.

There was a tendency towards lenient marking in some submissions where moderation found the tradition or practice to be partially and loosely applied. The main aim of this devising piece is to imitate the professional production reviewed by candidates.

Candidates should be made aware when undertaking the investigation, that contemporary productions seeking to engage present day audiences may not always be rigorous in applying the traits of more historical theatrical styles. Care should be taken when investigating such productions to distinguish the key elements of the style for devising as distinct from other aspects of performance in a contemporary professional production that may have been included for broader entertainment effect. Research into the practitioner, tradition or style prior to the investigation of a professional production is likely to be beneficial to candidates



in being able to make those essential distinctions when undertaking the investigation, from which they can judiciously adopt or discard elements from the professional production for their own devising.

A clear example is Commedia dell'Arte, where the tradition is street theatre rather than scripted stage performance. Accordingly, there are no historically recorded productions, and Goldoni's *A Servant to Two Masters* adapted to the present day commercially recorded production as *One Man, Two Guvnors* has very evident traits of Commedia but is not entirely in keeping with the tradition. The modernisation does not include the use of masks and of some other significant character elements of the tradition. Successful centre submissions were seen that had investigated this production and had adopted relevant style elements while including from their own research the very recognisable and historically accurate aspects of the tradition.

It is not a requirement that a production for investigation has to be viewed, from film or video record. A well-documented historical performance from the pre-film period which has been analysed and reviewed by critics of the time and where the practitioners or performers have left some record of their experiences in preparing and performing may be a very viable subject for investigation.

Centres citing more than one work investigated tended towards a more generalised presentation of the intended traits of practitioner, tradition or style. In instances where a group cited more than one practitioner or style for investigation, it was not possible to be entirely clear in the devising and performance what was intended in relation to the requirements for this component, and marks were limited accordingly.

Conversely where a group devised piece had taken an existing narrative from a work investigated and re-presented it in a different cultural context, this was an adaptation of the work investigated rather than devising. As such it could not attain the full range of marks for devising and roles.

Bertolt Brecht and Frantic Assembly were two popular practitioners for investigation. Effective devising was seen where candidates had researched not just the production but the relevant philosophies of the practitioners from which a political or social intent could be included in the devising outcome. Sustained application of the distinctive traits of the practitioner requires a thorough grasp of acting methods, such as Brecht's representational acting and Frantic Assembly's concerns to communicate close interpersonal relationships through physical as well as emotional engagement. For candidates to attain the upper ranges close attention needs to be paid to the presentational details of a practitioner and their traditions.

A broad-brush approach is only likely to meet the criteria for the middle bands, showing general competency in understanding of the style in the practical work. Practical staging methods and techniques relevant to the tradition or style should be given careful consideration and applied as they relate both to the practitioner's concerns and approaches and integrated into the devising accordingly.

A number of submissions for Revenge Tragedy were seen by moderators. There needs to be careful consideration that Revenge is a tradition with very recognisable elements of style in its time. As a traditional form, it is considerably more than a narrative of retribution between two or more aggrieved individuals or groups, which candidates should recognise and present in their own devising to fulfil the requirements of this component.

The devising in any of the listed options in the syllabus should seek to adopt and apply the full range of potential aspects of a practitioner, tradition or style as they can be drawn from the production of the work investigated.

Centres should be clear that the use of technology and other staging methods in their group performance is creditable only within the 10 marks available in Part A for *the application of the distinctive traits of the chosen tradition, practitioner or style*, and credit for staging should only be awarded where the staging elements used are recognisable traits of the practitioner or style.

#### *Written evaluations*

The assessment criteria for the written evaluation for Group Devised performance are clear that marks are to be awarded for ***an account of the process of devising the piece and identifying its artistic outcomes*** and ***an evaluation of their personal contribution to the success of the devised performance in achieving its intentions***. The focus of the writing should be on the devising and the personal involvement of the individual in the qualities of the final piece as a performance outcome.

A significant minority of centres offered evaluations of the group devised performance as a post-performance review of the event, sometimes including audience responses as evidence of the success of the performance. This does not fulfil the requirements of the syllabus.

Submissions from some of the centres used a common template format which was used by most or all candidates to structure the writing of their evaluations. This is not appropriate. The teacher-assessor should not direct the writing of the evaluation. As an A2 component at the highest level of the A level qualification there is an expectation that candidates will have developed the necessary skills to create their own structures for evaluative writing.

Centres might find it useful to refer candidates to the assessment criteria on page 41 of the syllabus for the written evaluation as a guideline for what is expected in their writing.

Some evaluations discussed a practitioner or style but did not clearly identify a work investigated. This limited the depth of analysis.

The quality of the written evaluations tended towards a competent explanation of the process; reasoned and analytical accounts of the devising were sometimes evident.

Almost all evaluative writing seen was within the 800–word limit.

### *Designers*

There was an increase in the number of design entries in this session. Page 37 of the syllabus requires that the design candidate should produce a design proposal to support their intended contribution to the group devised performance. This should include developed evidence that:

- The design/technical work is intended to realise clear intentions
- The work is consistent with the group and the style of the piece.

And the submission should include:

- practical demonstration of design/technical skills supported by written portfolio of notes, instructions, sketches, diagrams, photographs.

Few candidates offering this option submitted developed accounts of a design proposal. The syllabus states that *Designers in all disciplines must present a written portfolio of evidence of their work and its contribution to the piece. Conceptualisations, supporting diagrams, layout plans and images must be of a sufficiently high standard to communicate ideas effectively at this level.*

Portfolios of design evidence were often brief and lacking in significant evidence of the candidate's proposal for a design in keeping with the practitioner, tradition or style. Lighting cue sheets unrelated to an annotated script are not evidence by which moderation can evaluate the candidate's intentions. A practical demonstration of a design proposal may be offered in a video presentation made to camera by the candidate in support of the portfolio of evidence. This may include an explanation of elements of the portfolio to be submitted to the moderator. This video may be offered in addition to the video record of the Group Devised performance in which the design may be realised.

Assessment criteria for designers are included alongside those for performers in the syllabus. Centres must apply these in their marking. Where marks are awarded in the upper range for design elements, the design proposal and supporting portfolio must be of a sufficient level of detail, depth and relevance for moderation to support the centre's marks.

### **Individual performance (20 marks)**

*Texts chosen for performance*

A range of texts and themes was chosen for performance. Variations on the themes of love, trauma, family relationships, madness and gender issues were popular themes. In almost all presentations candidates showed commitment to the chosen texts and to their chosen theme.

The majority of marking was within the appropriate bands for the individual performance, although both lenient and harsh marking was sometimes apparent in moderating the performances against the assessment criteria. Centres should not reward variety of styles presented or penalise candidates where performance qualities may be similar as there is no specific requirement that the Individual Performance should present a contrast between pieces or to the Group Devised performance.

However, where there was very close similarity in style and material between group and individual presentation the candidate's versatility as a performer and range of knowledge and understanding of what is possible on stage was sometimes narrowly apparent.

The task is to deliver three or more existing texts on a chosen theme linked by brief introductory material. Very occasionally, individual performances appeared to be candidates' own devised speeches, as a stimulus from original texts. This is not within the scope of the task, and it is for centres to ensure they have submitted the correct work to be moderated.

The specified time for performance is 6–8 minutes. A small number were below the minimum. Some significantly longer presentations were seen. Centres should ensure that the programme of extracts for performance meets the given time requirement and that material beyond 8 minutes for performance should not be marked. As with any examination, candidates are required to plan, manage their work, and adapt as necessary to ensure they fulfil the requirements of the syllabus, including the time constraints.

In a number of instances, candidates had to hand sheets of paper or documents on stage during the Individual Performance from which it appeared they could be reading. This was apparent both in the performance of the texts and in the linking material. While the syllabus states that linking material may be written or improvised, there is a general expectation, in all performance presentations, that the material will be rehearsed and committed to memory. Candidates should avoid giving the impression that they may be potentially reading from a document during the Individual Performance. Where a lectern, book or clipboard are chosen as props, candidates must be very clear in performance that they are not reading from any written material.

The use of a sleeping partner on stage who does not engage with the action and to whom the single candidate may address their performance is permitted as is stated in the syllabus. This was seen and was appropriately managed in some performances. Additional voices heard on stage, recorded or live, are an infringement. This includes recordings of the candidate's own voice. Additional voice material generates aspects of duologue in a solo performance. However, the candidates themselves may represent more than one character within the same text; this was seen also to viable effect.

Dance and Music skills may not be assessed as part of individual presentations.

The provision of space for performing the individual presentations varied considerably in submissions seen. Although facilities in centres may vary widely, and there are no marks for the quality of staging for the individual performances, there is an expectation that a stage will be provided and adequately set for a formally assessed performance presentation, and the centre should make provision for this as for any examination. A performance against a wall in a communal space which also has intrusive classroom noise close by is clearly not conducive to an examination.

As in much performance, however, often the most effective presentations were those with just the actor and the stage space, with a single item of furniture, one or two props and quick-change items of costume for a specific text.

#### *Links between texts performed*

Although this is an assessed part of the Individual performance with specific assessment criteria on page 42 of the syllabus, there was considerable variation between centres regarding the provision of linking material. Centres are reminded that all texts should be introduced as they are about to be performed and this should consist of more than just naming the theme or by making a reference to the theme or texts part way through the performance. There is no single correct way to introduce a text; it is part of the creativity of presentation that the candidate should devise their own links to ensure the progression is engaging and informative to the audience.

In the progression of their programme of pieces it is for the candidate to create their own distinction by voice and manner between link and performance, but it should be entirely clear to the audience and to the moderator by alteration of voice and manner at any moment in the presentation, that the candidate is either presenting a text or is making a link. Where this is unclear at any point in performance the maximum mark awarded should be Level 2, as this is *uneven communication of the theme*.

Most candidates achieved clear links straightforwardly, usually by stepping out of performance role to comment and introduce the next piece, sometimes connecting the one just performed to the next one, as the syllabus states should be included. While making the links candidates should not enter into a personal discussion of their opinions or propose an argument on the subject of the theme. The syllabus states the links should be brief and should not outweigh the performance of the texts; also, that there is no need for a concluding comment after the final piece.

Where links were not included between texts, moderation for AO3 Communication will always limit the mark to a maximum of level 2, *Uneven communication of the theme*. Performances that blend from one piece into the link and onwards to the next piece without clear introduction or differentiation between texts should also be marked to Level 2 or level 1 *Minimal communication of the theme*.

Candidates are to be reminded that they must not use extracts of any texts set for Component 1 written examination for Component 3 performance as stated on page 19 of syllabus subject content.

Theatre Traditions and Styles	
<i>Absurd Drama</i>	<i>Exit The King, Happy Days, No Exit, The Birthday Party, Waiting for Godot</i>
<i>Commedia Dell'Arte</i>	<i>A Servant to Two Masters/ One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
<i>Revenge Tragedy</i>	<i>Hamlet, The Duchess of Malfi, The Spanish Tragedy, Titus Andronicus</i>
Practitioners	
<i>Artaud</i>	<i>Jet of Blood</i>
<i>Steven Berkoff</i>	<i>Metamorphosis</i>
<i>Bertolt Brecht</i>	<i>Mother Courage And Her Children, The good Person of Sechuan, Fear and Misery in the Third Reich</i>
<i>Theatre de Complicite</i>	<i>A Disappearing Number</i>
<i>Frantic Assembly</i>	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time, Love Song, Things I Know To Be True</i>
<i>Finger Players</i>	<i>My Friend A Japanese Soldier</i>
<i>Grotowski</i>	<i>The Constant Prince</i>
<i>Katie Mitchell</i>	<i>Ophelias Zimmer, Waves</i>
<i>Robert Wilson</i>	<i>Einstein On The Beach, The Black Rider</i>

# DRAMA

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<p><b>Paper 9482/04</b> <b>Theatre in Context</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

The choice of an appropriate research question or statement is the primary key message for this paper. This is crucial in that it guides the direction of the essay. A well-focussed, specific research question or statement is key to accessing the full range of marks available.

Centres are reminded that the focus of Component 4 is on theatre-making which requires applied, practical outcomes. Examples of practitioners' work should contain clear, practical detail. Literary analysis of practitioners' work cannot score highly. The same may be said of essays with emphasis on socio-historical content. Similarly, biographical detail does not contribute positively in most cases and should only be included where it may shed specific light on a practitioner's output.

Figures (illustrations) are often very helpful, but they must be clearly labelled, credited and contextualised to reflect accurately the aspect of the discussion to which they refer.

Where a particular theatre production is cited, references must be clear; production details should include theatre/company/director/practitioner, location and date.

Where non-English text is used – for example where reference is made to titles of plays in their original language - these should also be translated into English wherever possible.

Centres are requested to ensure that they do not allow their candidates to stray from the focus of this component i.e., applied, practical theatre making. This series saw essays which chose to focus on non-theatre topics including acting for camera, films (including musical theatre versions on film) simulations focussed on a costumed dining experience and virtual reality experiences. The assessment objectives for Component 4 do not accommodate such approaches and therefore they cannot be awarded marks.

Centres are urged to ensure that they upload for marking the research essay and the bibliography **only**. In several cases multiple documents, some unrelated to Component 4, had been uploaded and these had to be raised as exceptions.

## **General comments**

As last year, there was a range of work with some excellent essays that proposed a clear question, with suitable scope for the parameters of the task, and a clear response that used a carefully selected range of sources appropriately.

These responses were characterised by having a clearly defined, particular focus, and in a significant number of cases elected to compare closely two performance texts which the author had either watched live or via digital means. This attention to productions that could be experienced first-hand proved more successful than essays which analysed 'dry' texts without reference to a specific performance. Indeed, it is highly recommended that wherever possible, centres encourage their candidates to experience as much live theatre as possible since this undoubtedly enables a greater appreciation of the practical considerations of theatre making. Essays which strayed into the field of literary criticism could not access the full range of assessment objectives across the mark scheme.

Where candidates chose to focus on the portrayal, **in performance**, of specific characters instead of a whole production they produced some extremely well-developed essays which achieved highly. Examples seen included a discussion of tragic heroines as featured in plays such as *Medea* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Theatre design featured quite prominently this year and design-based essays were either very well written with great detail, excellent illustrative material and sophisticated understanding of how the design elements impact performance OR they were little more than a superficial approach to design that failed to make the links between design, performance and impact. Design responses tended to explore in the majority of cases, musical theatre. Candidates were clearly enthusiastic about their chosen area and where the precepts of the syllabus were closely adhered to, the results were to a high standard. Productions featured spanned a broad repertoire, of which *Hamilton*, *Beetlejuice* and *The Lion King* are just some examples. Non-musical productions focussing on design included *Jane Eyre*, *Metamorphosis* and *A Monster Calls*. However, in all cases candidates should be encouraged to pick what interests them, not what they think will achieve highly.

In summary, the strongest work was characterised by the following:

- a well-chosen question/title
- a passion for the chosen topic

Evidence of research

- thorough research and exploration
- highly relevant, well-referenced/cited sources
- clear examples of wider reading/viewing as noted in a comprehensive bibliography
- a clear, concise conclusion
- well-researched and carefully selected illustrative figures.

### **Comments on specific criteria**

#### **Criteria A**

More essays this year had limited bibliographies which was reflected in an overall lack of sophistication of response; the lack of a robust bibliography is a reliable indicator of insufficient depth in research which in turn often leads to a superficial essay which cannot score highly. Conversely, there were examples of essays supported by a very detailed bibliography but more concerned with socio-historical contexts rather than performance and bringing theatre to life. Irrespective of the chosen topic all candidates must submit a bibliography and in-text citations. Some essays were missing both elements. Candidates should be encouraged to cite all sources they have considered, carefully and progressively, including visuals, as they go. A research log may be of great assistance in this respect but if such a log is developed it is to be used only as a tool and should not be submitted as evidence.

#### **Criteria B**

After AO1A this was the second strongest criterion with many essays showing a good level of understanding of the practicalities of theatre-making. The best essays were rooted in the candidates having a really intimate knowledge of the performances they were using to illustrate their response, or where performances themselves were the focus of their essay question. The strongest work contained carefully selected illustrative detail that very effectively communicated and supported the points made. However, work that strayed from the parameters of the task into other non-performative areas often struggled to score well here. Without a deep understanding of specific performance outcomes there was a tendency towards a lack of depth in the essay in respect of theatre making in general, leading to underachievement in these criteria.

#### **Criteria C**

There was a range of marks in evidence here with some candidates analysing the artistic intentions and the creative approaches various practitioners have adopted. Without a deep understanding of specific performances however there was a lack of depth in analysis. For example, explorations of a theatre practitioner where the candidate had no practical understanding of the process where their ideas were delivered in real performance contexts, tended to undermine the discussion.

Sometimes the research question gave a clear focus on practitioner methodology which in turn helped structure the output to achieve the marks. A good percentage of candidates did try, to some degree at least, to offer 'competent' analysis. There is undoubtedly room for improvement in this criterion and centres are encouraged to address analytical processes with their candidates in more depth.

## Criteria D

As with criteria C, there tended to be a mix of achievement levels here with some well sustained and well-developed evaluation and some work with superficial or episodic comment. Again, it seemed much easier for candidates to evaluate practitioner or performance-related outcomes if they had crafted a highly focussed research question or statement, which by its very nature invited an evaluative response. Weaker essays tended to offer occasional evaluative comment, and these tended to remain general and superficial. As has been noted in previous reports, *referred* or 'second hand' evaluative comment taken from others does not constitute rigorous evaluation and cannot score highly. Such evaluative comment should be the product of the candidate, not of their sources but all too often the only evaluative comment evident in the essay was that contained in the cited quotations of commentators, critics or other practitioners